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THE FINNISH OUTLOOK, EAST AND WEST

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THE RECURRING TRAGEDY of Finland is that of a marchland state subject to the dual control of Eastern and Western Europe. It lies between the Russian circle of strategic control and the Atlantic circle of economic control. As a political unit it is dependent on Russian policy; though it is separated from the U.S.S.R. by one of the most effective natural barriers in Europe. As an economic unit it is oriented to Western markets and linked to them by established maritime relations which defy increasingly the restraint of the winter freeze. Finland shows one face to the east, another to the west. It balances an eastern frontier of conflict and a western frontier of contact. In spite of this, perhaps because of it, Finland retains an individuality stronger than that of any other eastern marchland state. Its political shape and economic form have been substantially altered by the Moscow settlement of September 1944. It is proposed to analyse these changes separately and to assess the possibilities of reconciling the eastern and western outlook.

The political approach

To the political identity as well as to the economic independence of Finland, the forest has made a primary contribution. In association with lake and marsh, it has provided this low-lying country with an eastern barrier in some ways more effective than a mountain range. "La forêt est la vraie frontière," wrote Jacques Ancel in the mid 'thirties, ". . . La Finlande, en dépit de la platitude du sol, a gardé son originalité par la protection de sa forêt."¹ The defensive rôle of the forest is noted in books on campaigning from 1809 to 1939. It is elucidated in the pages devoted to Finland by J. H. Marshall-Cornwall.² There is scarcely a frontier in Europe more "geographically demilitarized" than the eastern borderland of Finland.

The Baltic Shield meets mainland Eurasia in the three isthmuses which separate the Gulf of Finland, Lake Ladoga, Lake Onega and the White Sea. Finnokarelia is one physiographic region embracing the White Sea slope as well as the Baltic slope. The East Karelians, who originally inhabited the White Sea slope, are a Finnish people. Through these forest people the Finns merged with the peoples of Muscovy along the isthmian line. Finland as shaped in historical time has not therefore been the real borderland between Russia and Western Europe. The zone of transition has been to the east of the 1939 boundary. For this reason, Finland tended to be the most "racially" homogeneous of the Middle Tier of European states. Undue emphasis may have been given by Finnish chauvinists to the ethnographic relationship of the East Karelians; but in fact the relationship was indisputable.

From 1918 until silenced in the early 'twenties, the East Karelians strove


¹ J. Ancel, 'Géopolitique,' p. 70, Paris, 1936.

² J. H. Marshall-Cornwall, 'Geographic disarmament: a study of regional demilitarization,' London, 1935.

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Figure 1



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for independent statehood or alternatively for union with their western kinsfolk in a Greater Finland. A petition was presented at Versailles and again to the League of Nations without effect. Their cause was kept alive in Finland. The Finns have a messianic streak, which thus expressed itself in a nineteenth-century school book: "God has predestined the Finnish people to be for a model and a teacher of many poor races related to them." It was with lively anticipation that the Finns pressed beyond the boundary of liberated Karelia into East Karelia in their three-year war (1941-44). Their reception was disappointing. Occupation of the most densely peopled part of the Finnish-Karelian S.S.R. (to the line of the river Svir) proved that there had been almost complete "russification" of Finnish stock.¹ The population had blended with Russian peoples who in twenty-five years had assumed a majority position. Improved communications, above all the strengthened Murmansk railway, had reduced isolation. East Karelia (Itä Karjala) existed on ethnographic maps compiled in Finland, employing exclusively Finnish nomenclature from Äänisjärvi (Lake Onega) to Kantalahti (Kandalaksha). By 1940 however the significance of such maps was primarily historical.

Only in the south-westernmost of the three isthmuses were Finland and Russia in direct touch. To Finns, the word "frontier" is synonymous with the Karelian isthmus. The pre-war boundary from Ladoga to Petsamo—as long as a line drawn from Narva on the Gulf of Finland to Odessa on the Black Sea—meant less to them than the eighty kilometres of isthmus pinched between Terijoki and Metsäpirtti. With geological, "racial," linguistic, orthographic and religious boundaries in close juxtaposition here, it would be difficult to find a more precise frontier zone in all Europe.

The Peace Settlement of 19 September 1944 detached the bulk of Finnish Karelia from Finland. It was the most significant of the four territorial losses.² The others were Salla-Kuusamo (7,500 sq. km.) at the waist of Finland; the Petsamo corridor (10,000 sq. km.) in the extreme north, and the Porkkala peninsula (380 sq. km.). The last of these, commanding the approaches to Helsinki, was leased for fifty years. It has been described by Baltic strategists as a comparable base for Finland to the Isle of Wight for England or Sandy Hook for the U.S.A.

The present eastern boundary of Finland approximates to that drawn by the Treaty of Uusikaupunki in 1721. There is however a difference. In 1721 population as well as territory was annexed. Karelia remained a part of Finland in Russia. In 1944 territory alone was annexed. There was an exodus of nearly all the Karelian population. This implies two things. First, the possibility of irredentism developing in the ceded area has been excluded. Secondly, there is now a buffer area, presumably populated by immigrant Soviet citizens, between Finland proper and the ethnographically related peoples of Karelia. Viipuri (Viborg)—fortress, bishopric, second city and

¹ A diary account of this is given by Olavi Paavolainen, 'Finlandia i Moll,' Helsinki, 1947.

² H.M.S.O. Treaty Series No. 53 (1948). The appended map to this British publication uses exclusively Russian characters. The map in the present paper uses Finnish forms of place names in the ceded territories. The most important of these are Viipuri (Vyborg in Russian) and Petsamo (Pechenga).

first export harbour of independent Finland—was the richest prize taken.¹ It was on 14 June 1710 that Peter the Great said: "The town of Viborg surrendered . . . by the help of God a cushion is now made upon which St. Petersburg may rest secure."

The political dismemberment of Finland has not taken place without signs of centrifugal tendencies in two areas. The semi-autonomous and demilitarized Åland Islands, accorded to Finland by the League of Nations in 1923, have revived their plea for transference to Swedish sovereignty. The islands suffered seriously from restraints imposed upon their shipping during the war years. The Erikson sailing fleet is still a very lively concern though reduced through war losses and hampered by the expense of manning a two-thousand-ton vessel with up to sixteen fully paid hands in place of the cadets employed before the war. People are leaving Åland for Sweden, though there is a compensatory influx of Finnish-speaking peoples from the mainland. Perhaps in this influx is to be found a corrective to centrifugal tendencies.

Judging from election results, the High North is also moving away from the political centre of gravity in the south-west. These movements are at one with those of North Sweden and North Norway. In the past, North Finland might have pleaded neglect by the richer and more advanced south. That plea is no longer valid.

The economic approach

Territorial losses have directly weakened Finland's political status and have brought it more completely within the Russian sphere of control. At the same time they have reduced its economic resources and its facilities for supplying the markets of the west. Reorientation to western markets is also restricted by the reparations clause of the peace treaty.

The absolute losses in terms of forest, cultivated land, industrial establishment and domestic property have been published in the quarterly reviews of the Finnish banks and in the latest issue of the 'Finland year book.'² Here it suffices to say that the country's natural and capital resources have been reduced by more than a tenth of the total. Indirect losses have been as great. Decline in accessibility provides an example. Before the war the Saimaa canal made Viipuri the gateway to the most extensive inland water system and the largest forest area in the country. Finland's drainage channels entered the sea almost wholly within the political frontiers of the country and it suffered none of the problems of the land-locked states of Middle Europe. In the High North, Paatsjoki now drains Lake Inari through a foreign outlet. Land and sea communications of the capital—especially the winter channels into Helsinki—are interrupted by the leased Porkkala base.

The geographical dispersal of displaced people has yet to be studied in detail. Not less than 400,000 persons left the ceded Finnish territories; that is, a tenth of the population. Many moved for the second time, having returned from reception areas to their original homes after the reoccupation of Karelia during the second Finnish War (1941-44). They were given

¹ W. R. Mead, "Viipuri: its importance in the economic and political geography of Finland," *Scott. Geogr. Mag.* 57 (1940) 120-7.

² 'Finland year book,' Helsinki, 1947.

only a few hours—at most, days—in which to move. The reception and dispersal areas have been outlined by the Ministry of the Interior's Department for Displaced Persons (Fig. 2). Like their Swedish neighbours, the Finns are a statistically minded people and it is natural to find detailed records of a social phenomenon such as this. Records are not yet published but are readily available in manuscript. Analysis of movement on a commune basis shows a striking conformity between the plan for and realization of resettlement (Fig. 3).

It will be seen that some parts of Finland are not included in the reception areas. There are two reasons for this, geographical and social. Resettlement is a short-period necessity; land clearance and drainage are long-period undertakings. Most displaced people were therefore directed to areas where it has been reasonably easy to carve out new holdings from the woodland. State woodland and the holdings of liability companies have been appropriated first; then private estates and properties. To grasp the social problem, it must be remembered that Finland is a bilingual country. To have transferred numbers of Finnish-speaking Karelians into the Swedish-speaking coastlands of the west and south-west would have created acute friction. Swedish farmers whose holdings have not been partitioned and forest owners whose lands have not been requisitioned pay a compensatory tax. Resettlement legislation has not been extended to the Åland Islands.

Paradoxically, Finland's most grievous material damage was inflicted by the allied German troops in Lapland. The northern quarter of Finland to which Rovaniemi is the gateway was subjected to the same scorched-earth policy as neighbouring Finnmark.¹ For the Moscow peace treaty was followed by a short war with German forces based in Finland who retreated to their Norwegian stronghold. It is rare to find a house, a bridge or even a telegraph pole in Finland north of the Arctic Circle which antedates this German war. Even the reindeer herds of the Finnish Lapps were slaughtered. (An appeal by the B.B.C. for the restoration of these stocks met with unbelievable success in December 1947.) The belled cattle which find summer pasturage in the northern scrub and woodland still stumble fatally on live mines.

Reconstruction proceeds apace. A new concrete and timber northern capital accommodating twelve thousand people was two-thirds built by midsummer 1948. Rovaniemi has a superb site at the confluence of the Kemi and the Ounas. Temporary wooden bridges carry a lively road traffic across the two rivers. The railroad to Kemijärvi is scheduled to be reopened in 1952. Although it will operate in sections until then, for all practical purposes Rovaniemi is the northernmost rail terminus. It is twenty-eight hours from the capital by tortoise-slow trains; four hours by summer plane in a restored domestic air service. A Russian agreement stipulates that a line is to be built through the Salla district to meet a branch from Kandalaksha on the Murmansk railway. In the autumn of 1948 one train a day was running from Kemijärvi to the frontier railhead at Kellosekä. On the western frontier, Tornio and Haparanda are virtually one city although they lie on either side

¹ Diderich H. Lund, "The revival of northern Norway," *Geogr. J.*, 109 (1947) 185-97.

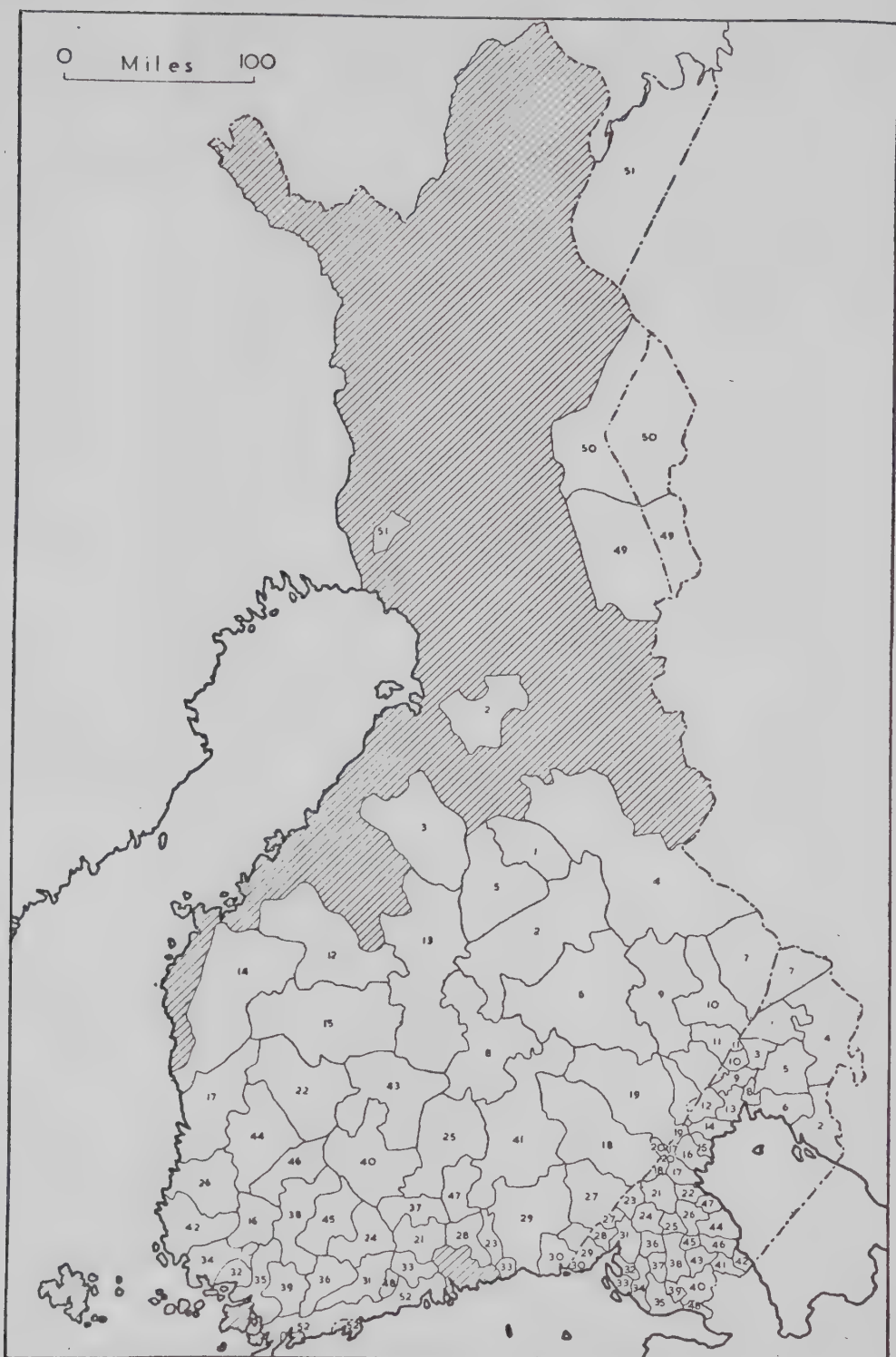


Fig. 2. Evacuation and reception areas (with corresponding numbers) for people displaced from ceded territories. Shaded areas are excluded from programme

of the frontier on the Tornio estuary. Their citizens have free access across the frontier. Since 1935 the migrant Lapps have also been supplied with special inter-Scandinavian frontier passes.

While reconstructing its economy within contracted frontiers and upon depleted resources, Finland has had to meet a heavy reparations schedule.

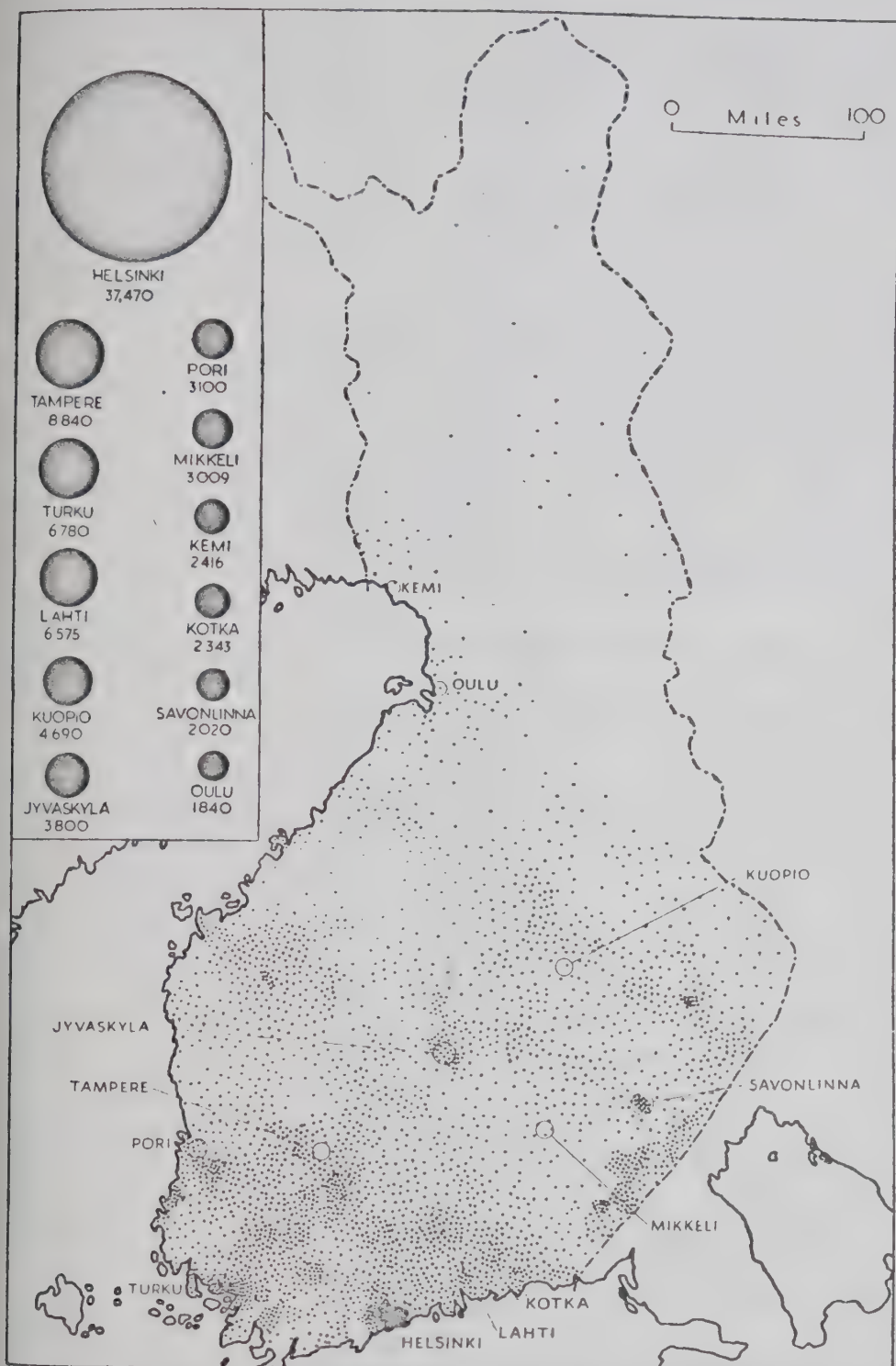


Fig. 3. Resettlement of displaced people, 1947. Each dot represents 100 people received, on a basis of rural communes. Circles represent numbers received by towns

Under Article 11 of the armistice of 19 September 1944 Finland must pay to the U.S.S.R. the equivalent of \$300 millions in commodities at 1938 prices. As amended on 1 July 1948 the agreement extends the period of payment from six to eight years and somewhat reduces the total. For the

economic geographer, the impact is of interest because it has altered the structure and distribution of industry. The indemnity, now nearly two-thirds paid, lists 199 categories of goods payable in a month-to-month delivery programme and imposes a fine of 5 per cent. for every late delivery. It is estimated that reparations deliveries took 17 per cent. of the country's output in 1945. The proportion fell to 9 per cent. in the two following years and is currently less than 4 per cent.

More than a third of the precise schedule of demands was for metal products and machine goods. Finland lacked developed raw materials and workshops to produce these. Though its metallurgical industry was of course expanded through the war years, it was neither large enough nor structurally suited to meet the reparation demands. All capital had therefore to be diverted to new factories in metropolitan Finland where labour and mechanical power were obtainable. The control centre of these state metal factories is Helsinki and there are secondary centres at Tampere, Jyväskylä and Turku. At the peak of Finland's war effort there were 55,268 people employed in metallurgical plants. By 1947 there were 78,106—a third of the total industrial workers.¹

Industrial output depends upon power. Power shortage is a problem at once due to natural factors and related to Finland's stage of economic evolution. For the country is largely undeveloped. It has an abundance of land (though much is of indifferent quality) and of resources (though the variety is not great) but lacks capital, labour and mechanical power. Power-potential is physically limited because Finland is without major waterfalls. The rivers draining the lakeland are broken by rapids which can only be harnessed by expensive dams. Nor is the flow of water as reliable as in the Scandinavian peninsula to the west, for though there are lakes to act as reservoirs, rainfall is much lower. The position in autumn 1948 was serious. The water level in Lake Saimaa was 100 cm. lower than average. This implied that the volume of water flowing through the Vuoksi channel was 55.5 per cent. less than normal. The neighbouring Kymmene channel carried 54 per cent. less.

Thirty per cent. of the country's hydro-electric power development was lost when the Vuoksi river was bisected by the 1944 partition. In order to offset this and to meet the expanding needs of industry, twenty new dams are scheduled for immediate construction. Three major schemes are outstanding. Pyhakoski Fall (Leppiniemi) on the Oulujoki generates 132,000 h.p. at a sixty-metre rapid with American turbines. Oulu itself is the seat of a second dam—popularly known as "Oulu Savings Bank"—which spans the estuary of the river. And a dam generating 150,000 h.p. rears immense levées on either side of the Kemi estuary. Such developments can compensate for but never replace the Vuoksi plants which formerly served the domestic and industrial needs of the more populous and advanced south-west.

Finland has neither coal beds nor oil deposits. Before the war it imported a steady two million tons of coal and coke annually, principally from Great Britain and Poland. Coal imports have now been severely cut. The remainder is devoted to essential industry such as metallurgy or to vital consumer needs

¹ "Finlands metallindustriförening," *Årsberätt. för År*, 1947, Helsinki, 1948.

including domestic gas. (It is not often realized that Helsinki's homes are dependent on coal gas.) When fuel rationing returned in September 1948, the daily press advertised that one centimetre of water in Lake Saimaa was the equivalent of a ship's cargo of 3500 short tons of coal.

Timber is the first line of fuel reserve. It is essential to the inland forest factories far from coal imports, and to the railways which carry their products to the export harbours. These forest factories are strikingly uniform in size, employing an average of 1000-1500 workers, of whom about a third are dismissed in late October when harbour or lakeside logging ends. Log sorting is a formidable task, for every log is marked by the company owner and in South Finland there may be forty to sixty owners using the same waterway. Behind such factories with their waterside organization are three to six thousand forest workers. Most of their activity is based on the steam power provided by the less valuable birch, the waste from the saw mills, and, if necessary, by pine and spruce logs.

Shortage of mechanical power is matched by shortage of human labour. This seems paradoxical in a country with a steady population increase and a family life of almost Victorian abundance.¹ Moreover, child mortality has fallen remarkably where a century ago every third child died in its first year. There is still a measure of child neglect which springs from shortage of man power and the tradition of country women working the soil. "Woman is first and foremost a labourer: the mother's duties follow," observed Zacharias Topelius the historian, writer of romances and one of the first university geographers in Finland.² Personal observations and statistical analyses confirm that this is still so. Thus N. Westermarck, examining the working days of 960 housewives in Osterbotten, found the time devoted to farm work to be nearly a quarter as great again as that given to housework.³ A survey of 467 country households made by Elli Saurio shows that farm work almost everywhere takes precedence on farms of less than 25 hectares of cultivated land.⁴ Intensive inquiry by Martti Sipilä revealed that women do more than half the farm work on all farms in south Finland with less than 19 hectares of cultivated land.⁵

Farm labour difficulties have been exaggerated by two facts. First, the war made terrible inroads upon active young male labour. More than 70,000 men lost their lives in the two Finnish wars and another 50,000 are war invalids. Secondly, the labour pool has been disturbed by the high wages of industry. The rural population does not show a marked absolute decline; but it does show a substantial relative decline. It is losing people to the factories. This movement to the towns is additional to the mobility which Finnish labour

¹ An acquaintance in the Finnish Land Survey Office casually mentioned fifty-three first cousins. It prompted me to wonder what might have been Peter Kalm's reaction. He was very impressed by the fertility of the seaboard Americans in the mid-eighteenth century; but made no reference to the population features of Swedish Finland where he was such a live element in the later years of the eighteenth century.

² Z. Topelius, 'En resa genom Finland,' p. 33, Helsinki, 1874.

³ N. Westermarck, 'Svenska Österbottens Jordbruk och Befolknings förhållanden i Socialekonomisk Belysning,' pp. 220 *et seq.*, Tavastehus, 1945.

⁴ E. Saurio, 'Maalaisemännän Ajankäyttö,' p. 173, Helsinki, 1947.

⁵ M. Sipilä, 'Maatalouden Työajankäyttö ja Työntutkimus,' Helsinki, 1946.

has always shown. The small farmer normally supplements his income by taking seasonal employment in lumbering or snow clearing or part-time work like tractor driving. Such movement is socially and economically healthy, in contrast with the mobility of industrial labour. An instance of this is a typical paper and pulp mill near Kemi which, in 1946, registered 3571 new workers and struck 3239 from its employment roll.

The stability of the rural population and the place of agriculture in the national economy account for the rapid return to a reasonable standard of living from the first famine year of peace. It is less than a century since Finland suffered recurring famine. Any disturbance in the free movement of international trade is always likely to reduce the country to its formerly precarious position. Finland is still not self-sufficient in bread grains and the relative importance attached to animal husbandry has prevented the expansion of grain lands. An analysis of the statistics for the years 1941-44 shows that 200,000 metric tons of bread grains (rye and wheat) were imported annually. These imports represented 50 per cent. of the domestic harvest—and in peace time they were sometimes higher.

More striking than the size of these imports is the increase in domestic production. Boundaries of cultivation have been extended to a limited degree by piecemeal reclamation of forest and marsh between the two wars. But much more significant has been the transformation in the distribution of grain growing through the work of the seed-breeding stations at Jokioinen and Tammisto. In the summer of 1948 the farm research station at Apukka, 10 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle, had excellent stands of spring wheat. It is perhaps more important that private holdings near at hand had the same. Breeding carried on in collaboration with the Swedish institutes has achieved miracles which would have pleased the King of Brobdingnag. Professor Pesola calculates that there has been an increased return of more than 100 million kilograms annually in the generation of Finland's independence due to breeding alone.¹ Canadian and Russian strains have also been crossed with native varieties. The principal objects of breeding are winter hardiness, rust resistance, quick-ripening and heavy yields. With these ends in view, fascinating experiments are now being made with crosses of rye and wheat. Rye-wheat may well effect a revolution in the pattern of Finnish grain growing in the next generation.

Because harvesting is always risky on the frontiers of cultivation, grassland farming is better favoured. The most noticeable changes in the farm landscape are the extension of ley farming and the multiplication of silos. The "A. I. V." method of ensilage has caught the imagination of the farmers.² Not only does it provide an alternate cattle food to meadow hay, but its advocates claim that it can supplant imported fodder concentrates on which pre-war Finland was dependent.

The traditional policy of the government has been to build up stocks of

¹ V. A. Pesola, "Kasvinjalostuksen vaikutus maamme kasvinviljelystuotannon nousuun valtiollisen itsenäisyytemme aikana," *Maataloust. Aikakausk.*, Helsinki, 1940, pp. 43-68.

² A. I. Virtanen, 'A. I. V. systemet,' Helsinki, 1945. An English translation of this important book is planned for the immediate future.

grain in preparation for the lean years. Since the war, these have been purchased chiefly from the U.S.S.R. (250,000 tons in 1948) and have been the main feature of the restored eastern trade. There is a long historical precedent for this grain trade. Medieval Danzig, chief port for East European grains, provisioned Turku's breakfast table. In 1913 Finland's principal import from both Germany and Russia was grain. Stettin, linked by rail with Russian grain lands, was the chief port of supply.

The bases of reconciliation

Finland has to reconcile itself to its transitional position in Middle Europe. Because it adheres to the democratic traditions of the west, the development of contacts with the east is not easy. The strengthening of trade relations over the eastern border would seem to be a positive step forward. Trade with Russia, however, has so far been marked by restraint. Throughout the last century Finland's nominal independence as a political unit meant exclusion from the great trading area of the Czarist empire in which the bulk of the future Succession States then shared. Only after the trade agreement of 1859 and before the restoration of Russian protection in the 1880's was there relative freedom of exchange and of population interchange. Stronger commercial relations followed the outbreak of the 1914-18 war and the interruption of Baltic shipping. Finland became a minor industrial ante-chamber and transit area for Russia. Cotton, some of it carried by sledge from Norwegian ports in the High North, and metal products were the chief requirements; employment in the metal industry rose from 15,969 in 1912 to 27,066 in 1917. Russia's share of Finland's total trade rose to the 60 per cent. level which it had touched sixty years earlier. After the Revolution and Finland's declaration of independence, it fell to about 3 per cent. in the nineteen-twenties. The balance was favourable for Finland. Independent Finland, therefore, grew up almost without commercial contact with the U.S.S.R. It even experienced commercial antagonism due to Russia's policy of dumping forest products. The whole Finnish economy was oriented to the west which was called in to redress the balance with the east.

Economic cooperation over the eastern border, however, depends upon Russian policy. And this is incalculable. Forty years ago, General Borodkin wrote of Russia's relation to the marchland states of Eastern Europe, "Our whole policy towards the borderlands has suffered and still suffers from vacillation, want of continuity, extremes and lack of coordination in the working of independent departments. To this day, our policy in the borderlands remains unfixed. . . . Everything seems to depend on chance."¹ For Finland, his statement remains apposite both from the economic and the political standpoint. For, though the political frontier in the east may have been flexible, the commercial frontier has been rigid.

Fig. 4 shows the distribution of Finland's trade on a proportional basis. The increased free trade with the U.S.S.R. side by side with the flow of enforced reparations is one point which emerges. For Finland, trade with Russia has the further advantage that it can use land routes and ease the pressure on the much diminished mercantile marine. There are other isolated

¹ Borodkin, 'Finland, its place in the Russian state,' p. 25, St. Petersburg, 1911.

examples of positive commercial cooperation. Among the more recent is the investment of Russian capital in a new rayon plant—Viskoosa Oy at Oulu. Finland has most of the raw materials necessary to establish an artificial silk industry but has hitherto allied itself to cotton. The Finnish cotton industry has long historical associations with Great Britain. The U.S.S.R. is a natural source of materials for the steadily reviving cotton industry, which in pre-war

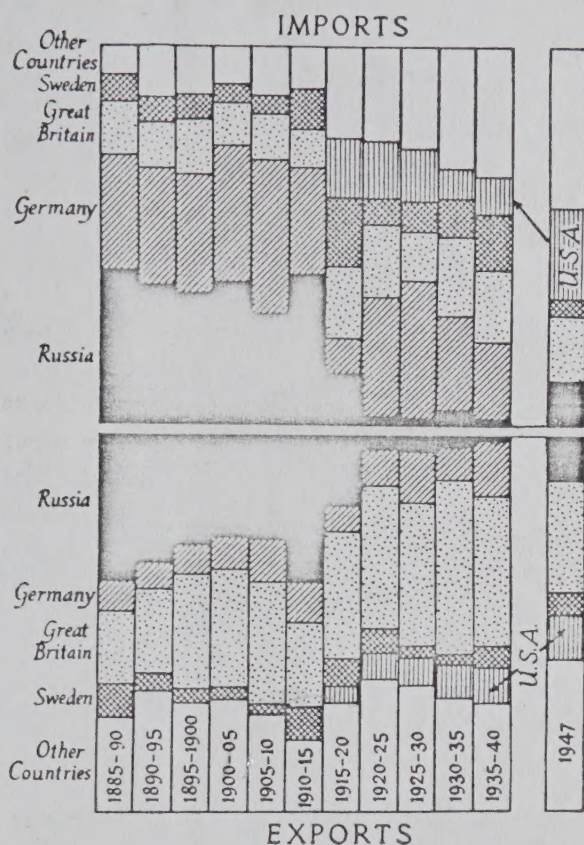


Fig. 4. Proportional distribution of Finland's foreign trade, 1885-1940, 1947

times supplied four-fifths of the needs of the home market. As for the metallurgical industries, it is a matter for speculation whether the east will continue to provide a market for a free flow of metal goods after the enforced movement of reparations comes to an end. The country may find itself in the same position as in 1918 when an inflated metal industry was cut off from its market.

Difficulties there are. But post-war Finland is rich in possibilities. It is still the most forested country in Europe after Sweden, and Europe is hungry for timber and its by-products. Europe in return offers that diversity of goods which Finland cannot produce itself. Finland is capable of sustaining animal husbandry and, pre-war experience shows, substantial dairy exports. It is still not fully exploited or even explored in

respect of mineral wealth. Four mineral sites are worked, of which the Outokumpu copper mine is most important. Six other deposits are known to be economically valuable. The Paatsjoki nickel deposits (now acquired by the U.S.S.R.) indicated the possibilities of arctic Finland. Many, like John Gabriel Borkman, though apprehensive of the strategic implications of development and restrained by lack of capital, are excited by the possible wealth contained in the Finnish portion of the Baltic Shield.

The future of Finland lies in its capacity to reconcile the interests of east and west. The miracle is that, in spite of the political neglect and economic pressure of the west, the economic neglect and political pressure of the east, Finland survives as the only independent unit of the old Succession States.

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